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ABSTRACT

Schools, colleges, and departments of education are becoming increasingly accountable for the training and evaluation of competent teachers, and are developing new ways to evaluate their graduates and their programs. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has identified three areas for evaluating teacher education graduates: competency, entry, and effectiveness. Data for evaluation of teacher education graduates could be obtained from four categories: (1) career line data; (2) direct classroom observation; (3) pupil, peer, and supervisory evaluations; and (4) standardized measures. Each of these categories relates to an NCATE evaluation standard. At present, standardized measures seem the most efficient and reliable evaluative data available to teacher educators for determining the quality of their graduates and their teacher education programs. These standardized measures take the form of competency examinations (before certification) and student achievement measures (after entry into the profession). Other measures of teacher performance include classroom observation and pupil, peer, and supervisory evaluations. More refined measures need to be developed to be used as admission standards to schools of education. (JM)

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Evaluating Teacher Education Graduates and Programs

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Paper prepared for the association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education.

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Evaluating Teacher Education Graduates and Programs

As the public demands more accountability from the schools of this nation, the schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDE) across the nation are also being asked to show evidence that they are producing competent teachers. The "Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education" of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 1979) states: "The ultimate criterion for judging a teacher education program is whether it produces competent graduates who enter the profession and perform effectively." This standard identifies three aspects of evaluating teacher education graduates: competency, entry, and effectiveness.

Like other professions and organizations, teacher education must evaluate its product-the teacher. This quality control and on-going evaluation process becomes the means by which both the product and the program can be improved. It is only recently that SCDE have become somewhat concerned with the formal evaluation of their graduates. Because there is no agreement on operational definitions for teacher competency and effective performance and because of the difficulty of even evaluating agreed upon criteria, most efforts for a systematic evaluation of graduates have been limited in their value.

The future looks brighter as the teaching profession moves closer to an agreement on some of the basic competency and

performance standards necessary for teachers. The development of improved evaluation tools and techniques has also aided in the evaluation process. The NCATE standard referring to the evaluation of graduates reads: "The institution keeps abreast of emerging evaluation techniques and engages in systematic efforts to evaluate the quality of its graduates upon completion of their programs of study and after they enter the teaching profession. This evaluation includes evidence of their performance in relation to program objectives." (NCATE 1979, p. 11). The literature shows that the evaluating of graduates has been a major weakness in many of the SDCE's (Fritschel, 1975; Sandefur, 1970). The failure to evaluate graduates and use those evaluations to improve programs is the most frequently cited reasons for denial of NCATE accreditation (NCATE, 1981, p. 4-8).

The need for teacher education to develop a meaningful evaluation of its graduates can be justified from several standpoints:

1) the apparent quality of teachers, i.e. teacher education graduates, is not what it should be,
2) the evaluation of end-products is a useful practice employed in other professions and organizations.
3) there is a lack of good systematic evaluation of graduates by SDCE in general,
4) the perception that teachers are not capable, and
5) the necessity of meeting standards for NCATE accreditation and other forms of program approval.

Sandefur suggests that career line data; direct classroom observation; pupil, peer, and supervisory evaluations; and standardized measures from four categories from which evaluative data on teacher education graduates may be derived (1970, p. 12). Each category will be considered in its relation to the three criteria stated in the NCATE standard on evaluation of graduates. As evaluation of graduates provides the best data for evaluating teacher education programs, both will be treated concurrently.

The first criteria NCATE gives for evaluating graduates is that the teacher education programs produce competent graduates. The measurement of teacher competency has been resisted as much as has the measuring of the competency of the students they teach. Nevertheless, the same accountability that has been asked for K-12 education teachers is now being asked of those who train the teachers. It can be expected that if teachers are required to produce and measure the competency of their students and to be accountable for the achievement of their students, they themselves should be shown capable of the task and SCDE should be accountable. No one would argue that teacher education programs should produce competent graduates, the argument surrounds the question of how, if at all, can teacher competency be determined and measured. This same argument has been used against the accountability movement in K-12 education. But even though achievement measures are limited, they none-the-less offer a standardized basis for evaluation. The 1970 NCATE standards introduced the requirement

for the evaluation of graduates through a new standard which read: "The institution conducts a well-defined plan for evaluating the teachers it prepares," (p. 12). The 1979 revision of this standard further specified and clarified the nature of this evaluation process. These new and expanded accreditation standards, along with other movements such as competency testing, clearly point to a strong trend in teacher education to improve the evaluation of both its product and its programs.

Quality control has been based on the completion of an "approved program" of teacher education. Those who successfully complete an approved program are certifiable as teachers and those that do not complete an approved program are not certified. The approved program typically requires the student to complete a professional education sequence with courses and supervised field experiences designed to give the student the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for teaching. The bulk of coursework completed by teacher education students is in their major and general studies, not in education. A program is approved by the state to train teachers and the state is responsible to maintain the quality of the programs. This is normally done through some form of periodic review. Although, the "approved program" practice has many merits, it has not assured the quality of the teacher education graduates and the SCDE have failed in their gatekeeping function.

The most employed measures of teacher competency are grade point

averages and field experiences. This is similar to other professions except that most other professions require the passing of a state or professional examination before one is allowed to practice. The argument against teacher testing could be used to a greater or lesser degree with each of the other professions. Few people would argue that written examinations are the best measure of competency, but they at least provide one measure and they can be a foundation or a beginning point in further refining the evaluation process. The National Teachers Examination (NTE) might be such a beginning point in the process of determining a competency standard for teacher education. Many states presently require the NTE or some similar examination be passed before certification. The trend is for states to require teacher testing and within the next five to ten years it appears that almost all states will require some form of external examination of graduates before certification. Not only do other professions use examinations to evaluate the candidates for entrance into that profession, but also those professional schools are evaluated by the percent of graduates who pass the examinations. Pugach and Raths (1982) examined several assumptions underlying the testing trend and found that "the current literature fails to support the key assumption that there are tests available today which discriminate between effective and ineffective teachers " (p. 13). They feel that the strongest argument for teacher testing is to improve public opinion of teachers, but

that the technology of assessment is not developed to the point where teacher competency can be properly measured.

It seems competency assessment is here to stay and what educators should concern themselves with is the ways and means of such assessment.

The second criterion of NCATE relates to entry into the profession. The percent of graduates that enter and remain in the profession is a measure of this criterion. Most other professions assume that their graduates will enter into and remain in the profession for which they trained. Placement data of this sort is useful to show that their graduates are employed, especially if they are in good positions. A number of variables limit the value of career line data, such as geography, placement efforts, economic conditions, and school reputation. A teacher education graduate may not enter or remain in education for a number of reasons not related to competency or the quality of the teacher education program or as some data suggest, the most capable teachers may leave teaching (Schlechty & Vance, 1981, p. 112).

On the other hand, entry into and tenure in teaching should reflect on the quality of a teacher education program, especially in times of over-supply of teachers. Having a high entry and tenure rate of graduates in teaching indicates a good selection and training process and that the teacher education program meets the needs of the profession. It also provides a basis for judging effective performance.

The third criteria, performing effectively, is closely tied to the first, competency. Competency examinations are indicators that a person is capable of performing at a certain standard, but do not assure effective performance. Other professional schools do little or nothing in follow-up of their graduate's performance after graduation. The responsibility for determining effective performance is left to the profession, the hiring institution or the market place. Most other professionals are assumed competent and capable of proper practice upon completion of their training and the passing of a professional examination and it is taken for granted that they will enter their chosen profession.

One method of evaluating effective performance is through direct observation on-the-job. Teachers are normally under a supervisor who should be in some position make an evaluation based on observation of their performance, but this subjective evaluation is open to so many variables as to render it only minimally meaningful and less valid or reliable than competency examinations.

Another technique that could give more accurate measure of effective performance would be on the job evaluations by trained teams of observers. This evaluation procedure is being employed in the form of first-year internships in two states at present. It is arguable whether this system is much of an improvement over the present practice of student teaching and whether the

added costs, time and efforts are worth it. Even the improved observation systems available in teacher education, pale in significance when compared to student achievement scores as a basis for evaluation. It is more efficient and reliable to base teacher effectiveness on student achievement, rather than observations that are supposed to be related to achievement.

The most utilized means of deriving data for evaluating the effectiveness of graduates and programs is through pupil, peer, supervisory and/or self-evaluations. This is mainly accomplished by the use of follow-up questionnaires.

The value of follow-up surveys have been attacked and defended by different members of the educational community. Katz and others analyzed data from a sample of follow-up evaluations in teacher education to determine the representiveness of the respondents, the nature of the resulting recommendations, and the impact of those evaluations on existing programs (1981). Major weaknesses were found in all three areas and the the authors suggested that the credibility, verisimilitude, specificity of comments, focus of recommendations, quality of suggestions and the feed-forward problems be considered in improving follow-up studies.

Adams and others (1981) defend the use of follow-up studies in conducting evaluations of teacher education programs. They caution that while Katz and other analysis of follow-up studies raises several important issues, the conclusions are somewhat

biased and do not reflect an accurate picture of teacher education evaluation.

At the present time, graduate and program evaluation through follow-up studies needs further development before they can be used as a credible measures of quality. Pupil evaluations of teachers have been shown to be somewhat valid indicators of teacher effectiveness (Remmers 1963, P. 367-68), but there is little evidence to support the use of peer or supervisory evaluations (Sandefur, 1970). Pupil and self evaluations are helpful in getting a measure of perceived effectiveness and may provide some data for program improvement. Pupil, peer, supervisory and self evaluations are helpful sources of information, but can not stand alone nor do they have as much reliability as standardized measures.

Standardized measures are used to determine the competency of teachers and the achievement of students. The fundamental problems with standardized evaluation techniques are to control for the many variables which can impact on the scores and to validate the instruments. These problems are being dealt with in the growing number of studies designed to improve the quality of competency and achievement tests. As effective teaching is defined in terms of pupil-gain, it makes sense that the measurement of pupil-gain would be the most reliable data to use. Pupil-gain measures are most refined in the areas of achievement and skills and that is where we can begin.

Personality tests have been used to determine teacher effectiveness. Despite the hundreds of research studies conducted in this area, little is known about the relation between teacher personality and teacher effectiveness, nor is a great deal known about the measurement of teacher personality. (Getzels & Jackson. 1963, p. 574).

The recent research on school effectiveness by such people as Edmonds, Brookover, Lezotte, Rutter and others also provides new data from which teacher effectiveness may be derived.

Sandefur (1970) proposed that evaluative data for teacher education graduates could be obtained from four categories: 1) career line data; 2) direct classroom observation; 3) pupil, peer, and supervisory evaluations; and 4) standardized measures, (p. 12). Each category has been discussed in its relation to the NCATE standard on evaluation. At the present time standardized measures seem the most efficient and reliable of the evaluative data available to teacher educators for determining the quality of their graduates and their teacher education programs. These standardized measures take the form of a competency examination before certification to practice and student achievement measures after entry into the profession. It is also suggested that more refined measures be developed to be used as admission standards to enter SCDE.

In conclusion, the methods of evaluating teacher education graduates and programs through its graduates have been considered separately. The trend of evaluating teacher education graduates

through qualifying examinations for certification appears to be a positive and inevitable occurence. It should assure some minimal basic skills competencies, serve as a data base for further refining our understanding of effective teaching, and provide a basis for improving quality.

The placement of graduates has some value as an indicator of quality, but there are many variables that impact on this measure and their influence is not well understood. Such data used with other measures can provide a more complete picture of teacher evaluation. The evaluating of graduates and teacher education programs based upon the quality of the graduate's teaching offers much potential, but many details must first be worked out. This is already done to a limited extent through student teaching, but some feel this should be expanded to longer internship with evaluations coming from several different sources. Successful completion of this internship would be a prerequisite of certification.

Follow-up observations and questionnaires are popular methods of trying to evaluate teacher education programs by evaluating the on-the-job performance of graduates. Follow-up methods have several limitations, but do proivde some basis for improving programs.

All-in-all, the evaluation of teacher education graduates and programs has a long way to go. But the journey must be undertaken and the challenges along the way met. The promised goal is the improvement of the profession, the educational system, and

ultimately, the society.

Even though substantial progress has been made in defining and evaluating teacher effectiveness, much more clarifying and refining needs to be done. We must use the knowledge and techniques presently available to vigorously pursue the goal of improving the quality of education through the improvement of teachers and teaching.

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